

Plan to have alcohol-free fun.

The best time for a woman to stop drinking is before she gets pregnant. But helping your family member or friend stop now can still help her baby. If you drink alcohol, you will help her stop by curbing your drinking, too. You can still have a good time together.



- If it's pleasant, go for a walk and take along a picnic lunch.
- If it's chilly, treat yourselves to a movie or go shopping inside the mall.
- Work out together at the gym, take a swim, or join an exercise class.
- Meet friends and toast the baby-to-be with a non-alcoholic drink such as seltzer and cranberry with lime.
- Support your effort by asking advice from family, friends, or co-workers.
- If you need more help, visit or call your local clinic or community center.
- By showing you care, you'll start being a good family member or friend to a healthy baby and mother. You can be proud of giving loving support.



Help a family member or friend

Have a
healthy baby.
Be an
alcohol-free
mother-to-be.

Tips for Women

How to help your family member or friend be an alcohol-free mother-to-be.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

Give good advice about having a healthy baby.

You could be an aunt-to-be or a grandmother-to-be. You could be a best friend or a close co-worker.

If you're close to a pregnant woman who drinks alcohol, you can help her in ways you might not realize.

Alcohol hurts as many as 60,000 babies born each year.* Any woman of any income or education level who drinks during pregnancy risks causing problems that are created only by alcohol. They are problems that cannot be inherited from moms and dads. These problems can affect babies, families, and futures.

Don't be afraid to talk with her. Take time to listen to her. Many pregnant women who know the dangers of smoking or using drugs do not know that even small amounts of alcohol can hurt their babies. And many do not know how to ask for advice. You may want to talk with a woman close to you even before she becomes pregnant. You'll show her that you care about her and her future.

It's the same for every pregnant woman everywhere and for every person close to her. Everyone wants to have healthy families.



* National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (2000), FAS Fact Sheet; Sampson, P.D., Streissguth, A.P., Bookstein, F.L., Little, R.E., Clarren, S.K., Dehaene, P., Hanson, J.W., & Graham, J.M.Jr. (1997). Incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome and prevalence of alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders. *Teratology*, 56(5), 317-326.

Talk about the risks of drinking any alcohol during pregnancy.

Find a quiet place to sit and talk about having a healthy baby. Discuss eating right and getting exercise.

- Remind her that, while she's pregnant, her baby drinks what she drinks.
- Any alcohol she drinks goes into her bloodstream and crosses the placenta, passing to her unborn child through the umbilical cord.
- In fact, because babies can't process alcohol, their blood alcohol concentration is higher than their mother's.
- If she drinks a glass of beer, wine, or a wine cooler, it's as risky as drinking a mixed drink or cocktail with hard liquor.
- There is no safe time, no safe amount, and no safe type of alcohol to drink while pregnant. Help her make the safe choice to not drink at all.

Talk about the lifelong problems alcohol during pregnancy can cause.

What if your family member or friend says she drank during another pregnancy and the baby was okay? Remind her that every baby is different and that no amount of alcohol can be safe every time.

- Tell her that drinking alcohol during pregnancy causes mild to severe problems, called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Some problems can make babies look different or have brain damage. Other problems are not visible at birth and may become apparent only later in the child's life.
- Babies whose mothers drank during pregnancy can be born small and have trouble eating and sleeping.
- Pre-schoolers with FASD can be clumsy and have problems speaking and following directions.
- School children with FASD can have trouble learning and paying attention. Adolescents can make poor grades and have mood swings.
- As adults, some individuals with FASD are unable to manage money and live on their own. Some need lifelong medical care.
- You can help a pregnant family member or friend prevent problems like these that can never be cured.

